

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

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TO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CS, GT, ES, NU, HO

SUBJECT: VESCO - JACK ANDERSON COLUMN

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF JACK ANDERSON'S COLUMN OF MONDAY,
MARCH 28, 1977, TITLED "US CONSIDERS VESCO EXTRADITION TRY".

2. BEGIN TEXT: "THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS MAKING A LAST
DITCH ATTEMPT TO NAB THAT ELUSIVE FINANCIAL FUGITIVE,
ROBERT L. VESCO, BEFORE HE ESCAPES FOREVER.

"THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION IS ACTIVELY CONSIDERING ANOTHER
TRY AT EXTRADITING VESCO FROM HIS PALATIAL VILLA IN COSTA
RICA, ACCORDING TO GOVERNMENT SOURCES. BUT TIME IS RUNNING
OUT. CONFIDENTIAL STATE DEPARTMENT CABLES WARN THAT VESCO
WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR COSTA RICAN CITIZENSHIP IN A FEW
MONTHS, THUS EFFECTIVELY MAKING HIM IMMUNE TO EXTRADITION.
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THE FINANCIAL OUTLAW EVADED THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AFTER IT
BOTCHED AN ATTEMPT TO EXTRADITE HIM IN 1973. A NEW EXTRA-
DITION LAW MAKING IT NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO SEIZE VESCO WAS
PROMPTLY PUSHED THROUGH IN COSTA RICA BY THEN PRESIDENT
JOSE (DON PEPE) FIGUERES.

"FIGUERES WAS GRATEFUL TO THE FINANCIER FOR HELPING TO BAIL OUT BOTH HIS GOVERNMENT AND HIS FALTERING PERSONAL BUSINESSES. BUT THE "VESCO LAW" WAS REPEALED AFTER THE CURRENT PRESIDENT, DANIEL ODUBER, TOOK OFFICE. THE UNITED STATES NOW HAS UNTIL JULY 1 TO EXTRADITE THE BRAZEN VESCO BEFORE HE BECOMES A COSTA RICAN CITIZEN.

"IN A CONFIDENTIAL DISPATCH LAST SEPTEMBER, THEN U.S. AMBASSADOR TERENCE TODMAN REPORTED THAT THE COSTA RICANS WERE BECOMING EMBARRASSED BY VESCO. PRESIDENT ODUBER, THE CABLE NOTED, NOW FEELS "THAT HE CAN ACT AGAINST VESCO WITHOUT ALIENATING FORMER PRESIDENT FIGUERES." ODUBER ALSO WANTS TO "DEFLATE THE CORRUPTION ISSUE" AND PUT AN END TO "COSTA RICAN DISGUST WITH THE IMAGE VESCO BRINGS TO THEIR COUNTRY."

"CONCLUDED THE CABLE: "IF WE ARE EVER TO CONVINCE THE COSTA RICANS THAT WE HAVE BEEN SERIOUS ABOUT THE VESCO CASE, WE MUST BE PREPARED TO MOVE ON SHORT NOTICE WITH A WELL PREPARED EXTRADITION REQUEST."

"VESCO: TAKE TWO - THE MILLIONAIRE FUGITIVE IS ALSO THE STAR OF ANOTHER CONTROVERSY. A DOCUMENTARY FILM ABOUT VESCO THAT COULD HAVE BEEN EMBARRASSING TO THE FORD ADMINISTRATION WAS SWIPED FROM A HOLLYWOOD STUDIO JUST TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE 1976 ELECTION.

"VESCO ALLEGES ON THE FILM THAT HE WAS PROMISED A PARDON BY PRESIDENT FORD, BUT THAT IT WAS DENIED BECAUSE OF UNCLASSIFIED

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THE FUROR OVER THE PARDON OF FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON. THE FILM SUGGESTS THAT U.S. OFFICIALS ARE AFRAID TO EXTRADITE VESCO BECAUSE HE MIGHT SINK SOME POLITICIANS WITH VERBAL BROADSIDES. HAD HE RETURNED DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN, VESCO SAYS ON THE FILM, IT WOULD HAVE CREATED A "HELLUVA MESS." HE CALLS THIS SECRET STOREHOUSE OF KNOWLEDGE HIS "LIFE INSURANCE."

WHEN ROBERT VESCO FIRST ARRIVED IN COSTA RICA, HE LIKED THE COUNTRY SO MUCH HE DECIDED TO BUY IT," SAYS THE FILM'S HAUER, VESCO'S FORMER PILOT AND THE AUTHOR OF A NEW BOOK ABOUT VESCO, "THE FLYING CARPETBAGGER."

"ALSO INTERVIEWED WAS THE EDITOR OF THE NOW-DEFUNCT COSTA RICAN NEWSPAPER, EL DIARIO, WHO CLAIMED HIS EDITORIAL ATTACKS ON VESCO CAUSED THE COSTA RICAN GOVERNMENT TO WITHDRAW ITS ADVERTISING AND THUS FORCED HIS PAPER INTO BANKRUPTCY.

"THE FILM, FINANCED BY THE MEXICAN TELEVISION NETWORK,
TELEVISA, WAS SPIRITED AWAY BY TELEVISA REPRESENTATIVES
SHORTLY AFTER A PREVIEW IN NEW YORK CITY. "IF YOU SHOW
THIS FILM BEFORE THE (U.S. ELECTION) IT WOULD LOOK AS
THOUGH MEXICO IS TRYING TO INTERFERE IN U.S. POLITICS,"
A TELEVISA REPRESENTATIVE REPORTEDLY EXPLAINED TO A NEWS-
MAN. OFFICIALLY, HOWEVER, A TELEVISA OFFICIAL INSISTED
TO OUR ASSOCIATE, GARY COHN, THAT THEY TOOK BACK THE FILM
AND SUPPRESSED IT, NOT BECAUSE OF POLITICS, BUT "BECAUSE
OF ENORMOUS COST OVERRUNS." END TEXT.
CHRISTOPHER

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